

MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL
MINUTES DRAFT
Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services
Friday, May 13, 2022
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the meeting was conducted by Zoom rather than in-person. The Zoom meeting information was made available on the DCF DMCPs Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council webpage on May 9, 2022 (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>).

Members Present: At the request of Chairperson Christine Holmes, a roll call was taken to identify the Partnership Council members present for the meeting.

Present were Ms. Libby Mueller, Ms. Carmen Pitre, Ms. Christine Holmes, Dr. Mallory O'Brien, Ms. Santana Lee, Mr. Victor Barnett, Supervisor Patti Logsdon, Ms. Bria Grant, Representative David Bowen, Senator LaTonya Johnson, Ms. Rachel Keith (representing for Senator Alberta Darling).

A quorum of the Council was present on the Zoom meeting at 12:15pm.

Notice of Meeting – Chairperson Christine Holmes reviewed compliance with Open Meetings Law requirements.

First, the notice of the meeting was published on the DCF and DOA websites on May 9, 2022, and in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on May 9, 2022.

Second, the notice was faxed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on May 6, 2022.

The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on May 9, 2022.

Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26th St. on May 9, 2022.

This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

Review and Approval of Past Minutes, Chris Holmes, Chair

Libby Mueller made a motion to approve the minutes from the Friday, February 11, 2022 Partnership Council meeting. Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr. seconded the motion. Motion passed.

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Transitioning Reporting from the Corrective Action Plan (CAP), Bridget Chybowski, Deputy Administrator & Mark Sarvela, Quality improvement Section Manager, Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

Bridget Chybowski shared that DMCPs Division Administrator Sarah Henery and DMCPs Ongoing Services Section Manager Jill Collins were in Seattle specifically attending a conference with other states who were under a consent decree/settlement. They will be sharing the collaborative relationship built between DCF/DMCPs/Children's Rights and stakeholders which allowed DMCPs to successfully exit the *Jeanine B.* Settlement Agreement in September 2021. DMCPs and DCF's Bureau of Performance Management are working to modernize the reporting metrics to best assess and improve the work of child welfare in Milwaukee.

Mark Sarvela stated the Settlement Agreement had a rigid process of monitoring for over 20 years. Mark Sarvela expressed this is in an exciting transitional point between the Settlement Agreement and how monitoring within DMCPs will look like going forward.

Independent Monitoring Report (IMR) Tyler Oettinger, Bureau of Performance Management

Presentation materials can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>

Tyler Oettinger introduced the Council to the Independent Monitoring report (IMR) for July through December 2021. After the joint motion to dismiss the Settlement Agreement was granted September 2021, the dismissal created the opportunity to reflect on the great progress made in the Milwaukee County Child Welfare system and gave the ability to update and define the measures in a more flexible report to internal and external stakeholders. A workgroup was developed sponsored by Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPs) and Division of Management Services (DMS) leadership to convene and identify new measures, some drawn directly from Settlement Agreement, the Corrective Action Plan, and through understanding other areas of interest that demonstrate the function of the Child Welfare system in Milwaukee County. The result is the Independent Monitoring Report.

In the report, areas of Access and Initial Assessment, safety, permanency, well-being and the workforce are covered. The report will be published semi-annually similar to the Settlement Agreement.

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Reporting on Access is an element in the IMR, specially related to the volume and response time of CPS reports. The Initial Assessments and Independent Investigations measurement is also newly created to show the overall volume of workload at DMCPs. When a screened in CPS Report is received, it is assigned to an Initial Assessment or Independent Investigation. During the 6-month period, almost 3,000 Initial Assessments and Independent Investigations were completed. On average, there were about 72 staff available to complete this work. For maltreatment of Out-of-Home care (OHC) providers assessment, there were 3 instances of child substantiated for maltreatment.

Safety identifies re-entry and face-to face contacts. Re-entry will be monitored in a new way compared to Settlement Agreement. In the new measure, the number of children who re-entered care are counted. Permanency shows discharge reasons and length of stay. For "Placement Type" measurement, there is a measurement of number of children in family like settings, congregate care settings and "Other".

Workforce measures are a combination of historic Settlement Agreement measures like turnover and information that was capture in the Corrective Action plan which is caseload. Turnover is the only annual measure in the Independent Monitoring report calculated by the number of case managers at the beginning of year.

Questions-

Willie Johnson Jr. asked what some of the exceptions accepted in relation to the Adoption and Safe Family's Act (ASFA).

Tyler Oettinger answered there are 3 allowable exceptions in ASFA. They are:

- Placed with a fit and willing relative at the time of the ASFA acceptance
- Not in child's best interest for adoption
- Reasonable efforts were not made by the agency, which is rare

Senator LaTonya Johnson asked on average how many cases did case managers have. Tyler Oettinger answered about 9 cases. Senator Johnson asked is there a reason recorded as to why 108 staff separated from employment. Tyler Oettinger stated he does not have this information, but it may be collected by the agencies. Senator Johnson asked representatives on the call from agencies if they conducted exit interviews and what are some of the reasons for the staff turnover. Susanna Leggio, Director of Child Welfare at Children's Wisconsin, answered that Children's Wisconsin does track the reasons why case managers are leaving and it's a variety of reasons such as promotions, staff returning to school, workload challenges, etc. A Wellpoint Care Network representative agreed and stated Children's Wisconsin mentioned turnover reasons were the same for Wellpoint.

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Chair Christine Holmes suggested to divide the ages children in out-of-home care in the measurements. Tyler Oettinger stated this can be a possibility for future reporting. Tyler Oettinger summarized some of the key historical Settlement Agreement measures of the last 5 years.

Eviction Free MKE: Changing the Landscape of Evictions, Colleen Foley, Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, Inc.

Presentation materials can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>

Colleen Foley presented that Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee provides free civil legal services to exclusively Milwaukee County residents. They have two Guardian ad Litem service teams, one in Family Court and one in Children's Court. They have locations Downtown, Children's Court, and a new satellite office on the South Side with two bilingual lawyers. Legal Aid Society is working in close collaboration with the United Way to spearhead the right to counsel for evictions and landlord-tenant resolution work through the Eviction Free MKE program. Legal Aid Society also offers a community lawyering project and provides affirmative business advice for entrepreneurs in Milwaukee zip code areas 53206 and 53204. Legal Aid Society also does work with elder law, expungements, and pardons.

Eviction Free MKE is set to help stabilize families and neighborhoods by providing rent assistance and resources. There have been conversations with the landlord community of this being beneficial for both the landlords and families because it expedites resolutions. It allows families a more dignified exit strategy and the emergency rent assistance can be granted to the landlord. The hope is for the project to go roughly 3 to 5 years. In partnership with United Way, an analytics group has been enlisted to collect data regarding the program and a report will be coming out around June 2022. Within the 8 months since the program operational, there were 8,947 evictions filed in Milwaukee County and of those, 2,306 were accepted averaging roughly 25% of tenants being represented through an eviction which is on par with other programs in the United States. Eviction Free MKE uses mailings and door to door contact to spread the word of the program.

Additional information for Eviction Free MKE can be found at EvictionFreeMKE.org.

Questions:

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Supervisor Patti Logsdon asked if there is a limit on dependence of future rent assistance and promotion of helping families eventually get off the program. Colleen Foley answered that the pandemic has financially and emotionally affected low-income communities and it has been difficult. Legal Aid Society makes sure they are providing clients with resources and takes a holistic approach. Families can receive up to 18 months of rent assistance retroactively and prospectively and the hope is for families to be able to become more stable in that time.

Senator LaTonya Johnson asked on average do all tenants receive roughly 18 months of rent assistance and how much do they typically receive. Colleen Foley answered that Community Advocates or Social Development Commission (SDC) administers the funding and may have this information. She is willing to reach out to get this information for the Council.

Ms. Bria Grant asked if collected is being used to show judges when evictions are not on a person's record, this can help them find housing in the future. Colleen Foley stated part of the representation with a case is trying to seal the record so that the eviction is not on CCAP. The report and data should be fully available by June.

Representative David Bowen asked if there any data that can be overlapped from Child Welfare with the data in housing insecurity. Colleen Foley stated they are tracking what zip codes are being served and the report can be used as a good point of discussion on what data captured can be particularly useful to child welfare system and what data should be captured in the future. There must be caution with doing this because of the Guardian ad Litem program.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Malorie Peter, Children's Wisconsin

Presentation materials can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>

Malorie Peter presented Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) is a signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA). Staff known as "recruiters" for the program are assigned to a caseload of children who are the most at risk of aging out of foster care without permanency. The staff use an evidence-based child focused recruitment model and receive training from DTFA. The youth and family voice is central to their work.

Children's Wisconsin has invested in this model since 2010. Wendy's Wonderful Kids is strongly aligned with FFPSA legislation focusing on restoring families and connections with children and youth. The service is provided at no cost to other counties or

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agencies. 100 cases have been closed since 2010 and 51 of the youth whose cases have been closed have achieved legal permanency.

Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) currently serves 8 counties and has 5 full-time recruitment specialists. Caseloads average 12-15 active youth. The program has never had a youth re-enter foster care after achieving legal permanency with a matched family through WWK. WWK does not focus on adoption, they are mindful of what the youth and family want, and this is the outcome they set to achieve.

Santana Lee asked how families are referred to the WWK program. Malorie Peter answered that referrals are accepted through case managers typically for youth in OHC. She is willing to connect with Council members to give information on how to have case managers complete a referral.

Rachel Keith, representative for Senator Darling, asked if WWK was seeing staff turnover issues with their recruiters? Malorie Peter answered there has historically been low turnover in their program. One recruiter did leave for different employment last year, but they were able to fill the role with another experienced Child Welfare professional.

Malorie Peter shared a video with Council. The video is called "Unacceptable". Video can be viewed at <https://www.davethomasfoundation.org/library/video-unadoptable-is-unacceptable/>

Bridget Chybowski added DMCPs received \$600,000 in last year's budget specially for Milwaukee children in Wendy's Wonderful Kids.

FFPSA Update, Demetra Parr-Nelson, Initial Assessment Bureau Director, Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

Presentation materials can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>

Demetra Parr-Nelson gave an update on the status of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) at DMCPs. The Supporting In-Home Services/Preventing Removal Workgroup identified children and families who returned home in 30 days or less to complete a qualitative review. The workgroup developed the qualitative review tool to focus on understanding the contributing factors of why there was a short stay in out-of-home care and to use the information collected to help with DMCPs staff practices. The identified reviewers of the qualitative review tool will pull together data for next steps.

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DMCPS, their partners, and Casey Family Programs are prioritizing voices of those with lived experience and aim to identify systemic barriers for placement of youth in family-based settings. This is to reduce the number of children in congregate care settings such as group homes and residential care centers.

Many contracted group homes and residential care centers are becoming Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP). At the time of the meeting, 25 were certified or going through the certification process. DMCPS had its first QRTP placements in Quarter 2 of 2022. DMCPS is looking into additional oversight of court paperwork, approval for all QRTP placements, and having DMCPS Administrator approval for extended placements over 6 months. Additional information can be found here: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/familyfirst/qrtip>

Demetra Parr- Nelson announced that DMCPS launched the Stronger Families Milwaukee program on April 1, 2022. In the Stronger Families program, Community Advocates will serve as the lead agency for Stronger Families consortium along with Neu Life and Parenting Network. The purpose of the program is to provide voluntarily services to children and families in Milwaukee County that are at risk of CPS intervention. Families will be provided with strength-based case management, peer support, and home visitations as preventative services. Bridget Chybowski added in the first month of Stronger Families, 9 families were served. Additional information for the Stronger Families program can be found here: <https://ppi.communityadvocates.net/policy-projects/stronger-families-milwaukee.html>

Question:

Santana Lee asked when DMCPS staff can't do the preventative services and children end up in foster care, how active are staff in trying to reunite children with their families? Demetra Parr-Nelson answered that DMCPS Initial Assessment staff truly focus on finding family members for children placement. A protective plan process may be used to connect a child to family members while staff continue to do an assessment. If a case moves through a court process, Ongoing Case Managers continue to try find family members to place children with. Bringing in more family voices and opinions to break communication barriers is a goal for DMCPS.

Committee Updates, Chris Holmes, Chair

Bridget Chybowski stated that quorum was lost in meeting and there could not be a vote on committee membership. She updated the Council Judge Crivello has stepped down from being Chair for the Out-of-Home Care Committee and a new Chair is needed for the Committee.

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Supervisor Taylor and Senator Johnson stepped up to be Chairs for Health and Education Committee in previous meeting but there is a need for a member in that Committee. More in-depth conversations of the implications of having two Chairs and the need for them to be present at every meeting will need to be had.

Libby Mueller did not have updates on Critical Incident Committee. Bridget Chybowski stated all the Partnership Council members are welcomed to attend Committee meetings. Committee memberships and Chairperson recruitment will be on the next Council Meeting agenda.

Community Input, Chris Holmes, Chair

Victor Barnett from Running Rebels informed the Council that County Executive David Crowley will be having a basketball tournament May 21,2022 at Washington Park. He will be sending a flyer to the Council members.

Concluding Remarks, Chris Holmes, Chair

Chair Chris Holmes announced that Penfield Montessori Academy is having an outdoor carnival with families at 3pm the day of meeting. This is the first time in 2 years and Chairperson Holmes invited Council members to stop by.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Victor Barnett and seconded by Supervisor Patti Logsdon. Motion passed unanimously.